

**Mojave-Southern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council**  
***Southern Nevada District Manager's Report***  
**Mary Jo Rugwell, District Manager**  
**March 16, 2012**

***National BLM/DOI:***

**President Proposes \$1.1 Billion for BLM in Fiscal Year 2013 to Protect  
Resources and Manage Uses of Public Lands**

With a focus on outdoor recreation, renewable energy, environmentally-sound oil and gas development, sage-grouse conservation, and other key priorities, President Obama today requested \$1.1 billion in appropriations for the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management in Fiscal Year 2013. This request is essentially level with the FY 2012 enacted level for the BLM, which employs 10,365 full-time equivalent staff.

The BLM is one of a handful of Federal agencies that generates more revenue than it spends. In FY 2011, nearly \$4.2 billion in revenues was generated from onshore energy development on Federal lands, with about half of those revenues going to the states where the leasing occurred. The economic output associated with the public lands is enormous. Based on a Department study, in 2010, extractive and non-extractive uses of BLM-managed lands and minerals generated an estimated total economic output of slightly more than \$122 billion nationwide and supported approximately 550,000 American jobs.

Under the President's proposed budget, the BLM will focus on the following priorities:

America's Great Outdoors – The BLM plays a vital role in advancing the President's conservation initiative to reconnect Americans to the outdoors. The 2013 budget includes proposed program increases of \$6.3 million for recreation, cultural resources, and the National Landscape Conservation System that would enable the BLM to expand and improve opportunities for recreation, education, and scientific activities. A \$1.1 million increase in the Cultural Resources Management program would allow the BLM to accelerate inventories and surveys to determine the presence of archaeological, paleontological, and historical resources; conduct more stabilization and protection projects; and expand interpretation and information sharing. A proposed \$2.2 million increase in the Recreation Resources Management program would enable the BLM to develop and implement more travel management plans and strengthen management of national scenic and historic trails and national wild and scenic rivers. The budget request also includes a \$3 million increase in the National Monuments and National Conservation Areas program to make it possible for the BLM to strengthen law enforcement, enhance visitor safety and experiences, and expand interpretation programs and products.

New Energy Frontier Initiative – The President’s 2013 budget request includes a program increase of \$5 million in new funding to further promote and facilitate the development of renewable energy on public lands. The new funds would support ongoing management of geothermal energy development, replacing mandatory funding previously available for this purpose, and also support additional studies to accelerate the identification of areas best-suited for utility-scale solar and wind energy projects. The budget also transfers \$2 million in base geothermal energy funding currently in the Oil and Gas Management program to the Renewable Energy Management program.

Sage-Grouse Conservation – The President’s budget proposal requests a \$15 million increase for the BLM to implement important sage-grouse conservation measures to help prevent the future listing of this species for protection under the Endangered Species Act. In its March 2010 ruling that listing the species was “warranted but precluded,” the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) stated that the BLM was not fully implementing the necessary measures to ensure species conservation. The BLM has been working closely with 10 Western states, as well as Federal, state, and local partners, to amend multiple land-use plans to ensure short-term and long-term conservation and restoration measures for the Greater sage-grouse and its habitat. The BLM seeks to amend these plans in a way that protects the health of the land and facilitates safe and responsible energy development and recreational opportunities that power the U.S. economy. This planning process was formally initiated in late 2011, and the additional funds requested in 2013 will enable the BLM to ramp up this process and take other actions to address the concerns of the FWS before the Service makes a final decision on whether to list the sage grouse in 2015.

More information is available online at:

[http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/2012/february/nr\\_02\\_13\\_2012.html](http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/info/newsroom/2012/february/nr_02_13_2012.html)

### **Comment Period for Greater Sage-Grouse Scoping Extended by BLM and Forest Service**

The BLM and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) are seeking public comment on issues that should be addressed in Environmental Impact Statements (EIS’s) and Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEIS’s) that will evaluate and provide greater sage-grouse conservation measures in land use plans in 10 Western states. To address requests for additional time to provide comment, the two agencies have extended the public scoping period an additional 45 days and will continue to accept scoping comments through March 23, 2012.

Comments may be submitted to the BLM by any of the following methods:

Western Region

web site: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse/western.html>

email: [sagewest@blm.gov](mailto:sagewest@blm.gov)

fax: 775-861-6747

mail: Western Region Project Manager, BLM Nevada State Office, 1340 Financial Blvd., Reno, NV 89502

### ***Nevada State Office BLM:***

#### **BLM Offers Opportunity to 4-H and FFA Youth to Train a Mustang for Adoption**

The BLM's Wild Horse and Burro program, in partnership with the Mustang Heritage Foundation, is offering a unique 12-week employment opportunity to 4-H and Future Farmers of America youth ages 15-18 to train a yearling wild horse, while earning up to \$750 and preparing the horse to be showcased at an adoption event during Reno Rodeo week in June. The Nevada 4-H and FFA Trained Youth and Yearling Adoption allows youth to earn money, while building their resume and offering a great experience for college/scholarship applications.

Interested youth need to submit an application packet by March 20, 2012, to the Mustang Heritage Foundation. Applications can be obtained either from the youth's cooperative extension contact or can be downloaded from the BLM Nevada website at: [www.blm.gov/nv/](http://www.blm.gov/nv/). Approximately 20 lucky applicants will be chosen to participate. Applicants will be notified the week of March 26 whether they were chosen to participate.

#### **Pick up dates, times and location**

Applicants must be able to pick up their yearling from the Palomino Valley Center outside Reno, Nevada either the week of Monday, April 2 - Saturday, April 7; or Monday, April 9 - Saturday, April 14. Pick up times must be scheduled with PVC: 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. week days and 8 a.m. until noon on Saturdays.

#### **Adoption date and location**

Unless the applicant is adopting their yearling, he/she must bring the yearling to an adoption on Saturday, June 16 at a location TBD in Reno.

#### **How it works**

The trainers will be fostering the horses with the option to adopt the animals themselves. The yearlings, which are from the Calico Complex in Nevada, will be randomly assigned.

For more information about the program, please contact:

BLM: Jeb Beck, Assistant Facility Manager, Palomino Valley Center: (775) 475-2222  
Mustang Heritage Foundation: Randi Blasienz, Event & Program Director: (512) 869-3225

### ***Southern Nevada District Office (SNDO):***

- Last fall, Deputy Interior Secretary David Hayes, and Neil Kornze, Acting BLM Deputy Director, visited Gold Butte with Southern Nevada District staff. The Gold Butte area has received lot of attention from citizens, local governments, and businesses on how to best protect and manage the unique cultural, biological, and scenic resources. Hayes and Kornze conducted a town meeting in Mesquite to ask the stakeholders to gather consensus on what kind of protection in Gold Butte is needed to ensure that the resources get protected for the future.
- Wildlife biologists from BLM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), Nevada Natural Heritage Program, Great Basin Institute and Department of Defense came together for a week of bat surveys near the Pahranaget National Wildlife Refuge. Bat Blitz, a yearly event organized by NDOW, focuses on gaining knowledge on bats throughout Nevada. This year the event was held in Southern Nevada. Fortunately, bats are drawn to water in the desert and our friendly ranchers have provided ample water through stock tanks. Therefore, bats were caught and identified using mist nets, very thin mesh nets, stationed over stock tanks, ponds and springs. This intensive monitoring effort resulted in 936 bat captures of 14 different species.

### ***Division of Fire and Aviation:***

- **Nevada Wildland Firefighters Join National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend**

Three wildland firefighters from Nevada attended the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend in Emmitsburg, Maryland on October 15 and 16 as members of the BLM Fire Honor Guard.

Southern Nevada District Office Engine Captain Vanessa Marquez, Carson City District Office Engine Operator Juan Zepeda and Southern Nevada District Office Assistant Fire Management Officer Chris Delaney assisted with the ceremony that honored the 91 structure and wildland firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.

The BLM Honor Guard is a display of honor and appreciation for the ultimate sacrifice made by dedicated men and women who die in the line of duty. Guard members represent the BLM at memorial services, and other special events, to honor those we have lost and recognize their family, friends and coworkers.

Constructed in 1981 on the campus of the National Fire Academy, the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial was officially designated by Congress as the national memorial to

career and volunteer fallen firefighters in 1990. It is a symbol of honor for those who carry on the tradition of service to their communities.

## **Field Offices:**

### ***Red Rock/Sloan Field Office:***

- The Red Rock/Sloan Field Office hosted an open house on November 9 for an environmental assessment (EA) analyzing the construction of a multiuse trail from the 13-Mile Scenic Drive entrance paralleling State Route 159 until it connects to the Scenic Drive Exit parking lot. Open houses, on various topics, will be held the third Thursday of each month at 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m.
- BLM paleontologists have confirmed fossilized tracks (footprints) made 180 to 190 million years ago in sandstone within Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. This is the first documented dinosaur tracksite in Nevada.

Dubbed the Red Rock Tracksite, dozens of tracks from the Early Jurassic period have currently been documented. At this point, two types of tracks and trackways are recognized from the site:

- *Grallator* tracks are footprints made by small theropod dinosaurs (two-legged, three-toed, meat-eating dinosaurs)
- *Octopodichnus* tracks are footprints made by arthropods (possibly similar to modern spiders and scorpions)

Because of the fragile nature of fossils such as these, the specific location of the Red Rock Tracksite is not being released at this time. BLM will partner with researchers to collect more data and further research the tracksite as well as create a monitoring plan and management plan. An interpretive display about the Red Rock Tracksite will soon be available at the visitor center and more information will also be posted on the BLM website.

- **Red Rock Sloan Field Manager Is Partner of the Year**

Tim Wakefield, manager of the Red Rock/Sloan Field Office, was named Partner of the year by the Association of Partners for Public Lands. Tim was nationally recognized for his commitment to engaging partners in a comprehensive approach that involves a blend of maturity, open-mindedness, strong work ethic and resource knowledge of all partners. Congratulations Tim on this honor!

- **Red Rock Racks Up another Award**

Sure it's beginning to look like the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area Visitor Center is the shark in the award pool. But when you're good, you're good! The visitor

center recently won the Grand Award for Sustainable Design and the Grand Award for Public/Civic Design from the Concrete Masonry Association of California and Nevada. Jury comments reflected the awe visitors feel when they visit the center: “The project lives elegantly with the environmental. The jury appreciated how the architect worked with the client to analyze the program to not only create a more sustainable project, but also enhance the visitor’s interaction with Mojave Desert landscape.”

- **National Trails Day Celebration**

More than 3,000 participants attended the National Trails Day Event in Henderson. Ranger Gina Mele, Outdoor Recreation Planner Brenda Warner and BLM volunteer Lance Hinton staffed a Sloan Canyon National Conservation Area booth which was visited by more than 280 people. Participants enjoyed information on volunteer opportunities, geology and plants and animals of Sloan Canyon through interpretive exhibits and hands-on materials. Information on new trails currently being built at Sloan, key chains, brochures and pens were handed out.

***Las Vegas Field Office:***

- The Las Vegas Field Office held three public meetings, the first week of November, as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) comment period for the Proposed Sloan Hills Competitive Mineral Material Sales.

Five alternatives were analyzed in the DEIS, ranging from 320 acres to 640 acres. Alternative one, at 640 acres, includes the sale of mineral materials in the North Site and the South Site to two mining companies that would operate independently and results in a single open pit mine. Alternative two, at 320 acres, includes the sale of mineral materials in the North Site only. Alternative three, at 320 acres, includes the sale of mineral materials in the South Site only. Alternative four, at 640 acres, includes the sale of mineral materials in both the North Site and the South Site to a single mining company. Alternative five is the No Action Alternative.

The DEIS is available online at:– <http://blm.gov/tsjd>

- The Las Vegas Field Office initiated a 90-day scoping period to solicit review and comment on a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Notice of Segregation addressing a proposed wind energy facility near Searchlight, Nev. The right-of-way application area encompasses 18,789.71 acres of BLM-administered public lands. The permanent footprint of the project, as proposed, would be approximately 163 acres. The public comment period will close **April 18**.

The BLM has determined that a temporary segregation of the public land is necessary to maintain the status quo while it processes the right-of-way applications. About 18,789.71 acres are segregated from new applications and claims under the public land laws for a period of two years, including location under the Mining Law, but not the Mineral Leasing Act or Materials Act, subject to valid existing rights. The temporary segregation is necessary to prevent the filing of mining claims in the project area which could increase costs or hinder the development of the project.

The proposal is to construct and operate a wind energy generating facility that would produce 200 megawatts of electricity. The proposed wind turbines would be 415-feet tall. In addition to the wind turbines, the proposed project would require the construction of new access roads; two electrical substations; an overhead transmission line connecting the two substations; an electrical interconnection facility/switchyard owned and operated by Western Area Power Administration; an operation and maintenance building; and temporary and permanent laydown areas. Three permanent meteorological masts would remain on the site to measure the wind speed and direction across the site over the life of the project. The Searchlight Wind Energy Project would generate and deliver electrical power to the electrical transmission grid by 2013 via an interconnection with the Western Area Power Administration, Davis-Mead 230-kilovolt transmission line.

### ***Pahrump Field Office/Renewable Energy Coordination Office:***

- The Pahrump Field Office is seeking public comment on a proposal to sell a 120-acre parcel of public land in Pahrump, Nye County, Nev., by modified competitive sealed-bid sale. The Notice of Realty Action for a land sale under the authority of the Federal Land Policy Management Act was published in the March 5, 2012 *Federal Register*. A 45-day public comment period will close **April 19, 2012**.

The sale is requested by Nye County for economic development at the Spring Mountain Raceway along State Route 160 near Gamebird Road. Spring Mountain Raceway LLC is identified as the designated bidder and will have the right to meet the highest bid in the competitive sale. Bids must be for not less than the federally approved fair market value.

According to Nye County, Spring Mountain Raceway LLC would construct a race track and develop private businesses on the parcel proposed for sale and would provide infrastructure, such as water and sewer lines to the property at an estimated cost of \$2 million. This extension of utility services would also provide a public benefit to the undeveloped county fairgrounds site directly across the highway from the Raceway.

- The Pahrump and Las Vegas Field Offices held three public scoping meetings in November to listen to and record comments and questions for Valley Electric Association

transmission project proposed on public lands in the southern Pahrump and Sandy valleys in Clark and Nye counties, Nev.

The public was asked to help identify potential issues regarding the applicant's request for a right-of-way (ROW) authorization for the construction, operation, maintenance, and termination of transmission infrastructure improvements, both 230 kilovolt (kV) and 500 kV, and a natural gas pipeline to support the development of the Hidden Hills Solar Electric Generating Project. The 3,275-acre solar-project site would be located on privately-owned land; however, the transmission and natural gas lines, once they leave the site, would be located on public land managed by the BLM.